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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1315  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0379

UNCLAS DUSHANBE 000044

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA and PA/PR/FPCW

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KPAO](#) [KDEM](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: [TAJIKISTAN](#) - NEWSPAPER EDITOR ATTACKED IN KULYAB

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive But Unclassified - Not for Internet Distribution.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Summary: Abdumumin Sherhonov, editor-in-chief of an independent weekly newspaper and a part time reporter for RFE/RL, was beaten by a group of young men in Kulyab January 6 when he tried to help two female journalism students. The students had telephoned him and asked for assistance because they were being harassed by two of the men. Sherhonov is not sure the beating was planned, but Radio Ozodi, RFE/RL's bureau in Tajikistan, reported that the incident was in response to his articles critical of local officials. Local police detained one suspect in Kulyab and put out a search for a second in Dushanbe. They consider the attack a random act of "hooliganism," but they have launched a 10-day investigation and will decide later whether to open a criminal case against the attackers. End summary.

[1](#)3. (SBU) A group of men beat a newspaper editor who was responding to a call for help from two female journalism students in Kulyab at 5 p.m. on January 6. Abdumumin Sherhonov, editor-in-chief of the Pajvok ("Echo") newspaper and a contributor to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), told local media that the two Kulyab State University students, who also report for his newspaper part time, called him for help from a cell phone because two young men were preventing them from walking from their university dorm to the newspaper offices located nearby. When he approached and tried to intervene, two men started beating him, were joined by a third, and then one of them flashed a police badge. He said two cars pulled up a minute or two later, and two more men got out. Sherhonov said he thought they were going to help him, but instead they started punching and kicking him. He told emboff January 8 that a crowd of about 100 people gathered to help him. Later that evening he went to a district Ministry of Interior office to file a report about the attack and provide forensic evidence.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The next day Sherhonov told local media that the police told him they had arrested one of the primary alleged attackers, Khalil Imomov, a continuing education student in the Russian language department of Kulyab State University. Sherhonov told emboff that local law enforcement had identified the second suspect who had flashed the police badge and had ordered a search for him in Dushanbe.

[1](#)5. (SBU) In his conversation with emboff, Sherhonov said he was not ready to make a connection between the attack and his reporting, although RFE/RL's Tajik bureau reported that the attack was in retaliation for his reporting. Sherhonov told emboff he published a story about corruption among Kulyab's traffic police in early December and a couple weeks later they called him and said, "That wasn't nice."

[1](#)6. (SBU) The BBC reported that local police believe the attack was just another random altercation common among young men, but they would conduct a 10-day investigation and possibly open a criminal investigation after collecting evidence.

[1](#)7. (SBU) Although Sherhonov is not ready to call the attack retaliation and is willing to wait for the police to complete their

investigation, another reporter was beaten up Kulyab in August last year. The National Association of Independent Media of Tajikistan (NANSMIT) reported that Zainaddin Olimov, chairman of the "Kulob" association, ordered the beating of Dzhurakhon Kabirov, a journalist for the independent weekly Millat, because of Kabirov's articles criticizing Olimov.

Jacobson